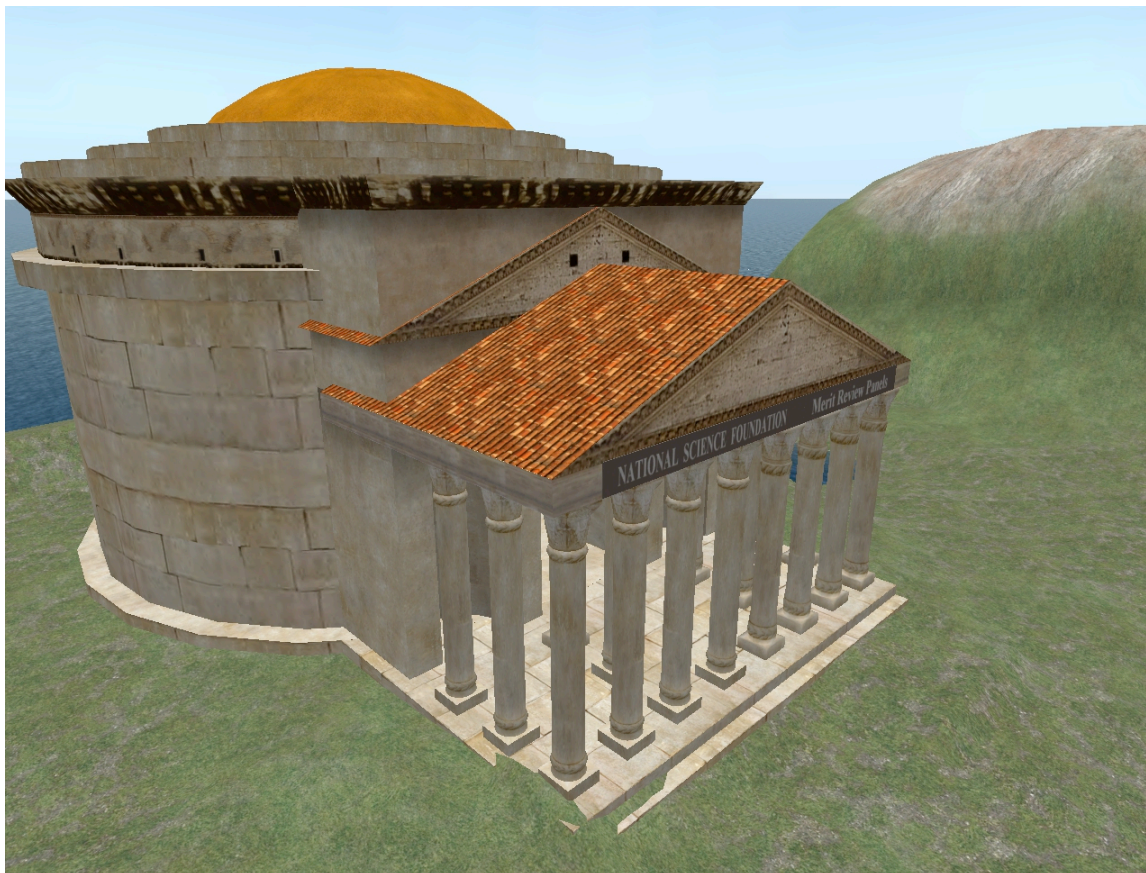NSF Virtual World Panel
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Here is information about how to participate in the online NSF review panel, on our island, "IISLand." Below is a picture of our new third panel room, based on the Pantheon in Rome.

On timing and time zones: We plan to start each panel day at 11:00 AM Eastern Time, to accommodate west coasters and other folks' schedules. That is 8:00 Pacific time. Second Life is on Pacific Time, so the clock in SL will also say 8:00 when we start. The panel will run two days. We will complete first consideration of most projects the first day - perhaps taking just six hours - and save the second day to complete written summaries of the proposal discussions and final reconsiderations of the best ones.

EMERGENCIES

In case of emergencies, my office phone is 703-292-7470. Please send me a number where you could be reached during the meeting. Also, if you will be using an email address other than the one I have been using, please send it to me, so if needed I could send you stuff during the panel.

YOUR WRITTEN REVIEWS

Please write and submit - "submit," not "save" - the reviews of proposals assigned to you. We need these before the panel meeting itself, because we cannot discuss the proposals until all the reviews have been successfully uploaded. We ask for the reviews two or more days before the

panel, so I will have time to schedule the order in which we will discuss the proposals, and assign one of the reviewers to serve as scribe, writing the summary of the panel discussion.

GETTING IN

Second Life works on most recent ordinary desktop or laptop computers with decent Internet connections. For the voice communication in the meeting itself you will need a headset with earphones and microphone, such as can be bought at Radio Shack for $20 or $30.

The Second Life home page is here: http://secondlife.com/

A link (currently a red-orange box at the left saying Play for Free) takes you to the page where you register (for free) and select a starting avatar: https://join.secondlife.com/

We strongly suggest you select one of the "People" displayed in the above picture, so that the other panelists will have a sense of interacting with a person, but a few panelists in the past have been comfortable being robots. Later, you will be able to modify the avatar's appearance, if you wish to do so, but that takes effort, if the changes go beyond merely adjusting how tall or broad the avatar is.

During the process, you will select a Username and a Password, which, of course, you should write down, even though Second Life's log-in screen can be set to save that information. When you get a chance, email us the Username of your avatar (spelled exactly), so we can give the avatar access to our secure island. Do not share your password.

When you enter Second Life, here are a few things to keep in mind:

1. You will begin where other people may be beginning at the same time, and any "people" you encounter probably are real people, but not NSF folks. On rare occasions, a *troll* or *griefer* will try to annoy newcomers, so please just ignore them!

2. A panel of advertisements may initially obscure much of your screen. Just close it, as you would any subwindow in ordinary software, by clicking a [X] near its upper right corner. But do not close the entire Second Life window, or you will need to log in again.

3. You can walk with your computer's arrow keys. If you find you cannot walk, often that means you have turned on the local text chat and the computer thinks you are typing. Simply click your mouse in the scene around you, and walk away!

4. If you are using a Mac computer, the commands will be somewhat different from the instructions here, which are based on Windows machines. We assume you are familiar with the Mac equivalent of "right click" in using the mouse, so when we say "right click," do that.

5. If your starting location is not interesting or comfortable, you can "teleport" to a different location, for example one of the educational sites in Second Life. One way to find a suitable location is through the Second Life Search system. If you see an icon of a magnifying glass near the left edge of your screen, clicking it will open Search. Or, you can select Search from the drop down menu near upper left, named World. A pull-down Search menu initially says Everything, but you can select Places. The enter one of these:

NOAA
Sploland
ROMA

And click [Search] to the right of the field where you entered it. One of the NOAA selections is NOAA on OneClimate Island, and you can click "teleport" inside its description to get to this educational exhibit of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Sploland is a nice science and math educational park. The best selection for ROMA is ROMA The Roman Market, a huge historical site representing classical civilization. When you teleport, you must wait a little while for the graphics to download, especially when in Rome. We bought our full-scale model of the Roman Pantheon at a different market in the same general simulation, for a total of $8!

FINE TUNE YOUR AVATAR

You certainly are encouraged to explore, and get familiar with the environment in your own way, or you can simply get down to business and adjust a couple of things for your avatar. There is no need to register your credit card or buy anything inside Second Life.

To set your display name, right-click your avatar and select My Profile from the little menu that pops up. Click the Edit Profile box near the top of the window that opens, then select Display Name. Please write your real name into New Display Name boxes, as shown in the following illustration.
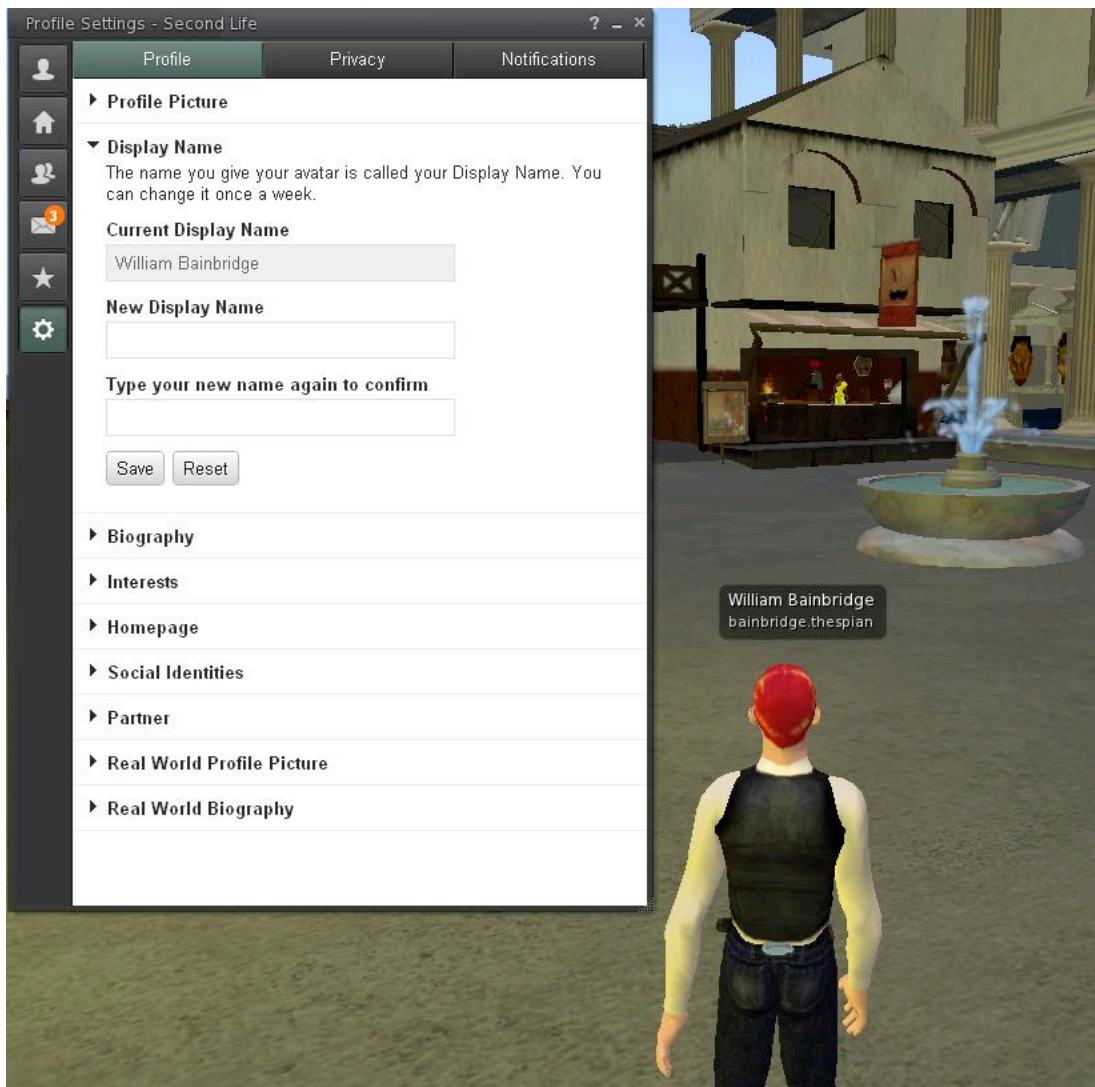
You may use Edit My Shape on the menu you get from right-clicking on your avatar, to change its physical dimensions. Edit My Outfit may also allow you to change the color of its clothing.

Once you have sent us your exact avatar Unsername, we will send you two invitations. One is to join Vannevar, the group that has access past security to our island. (Vannevar Bush was the key person in the creation of the National Science Foundation). When invitations arrive, they flash briefly on the screen, then probably (depending on whether you changed any settings) reduce to a small icon near the upper right corner of your screen. The figure below shows four views of the upper right corner. Clicking on the letter envelope icon opens a notice about joining a group. Do NOT click on the X, because that will erase the message. Click instead on the text, and a little box will open with a join option.
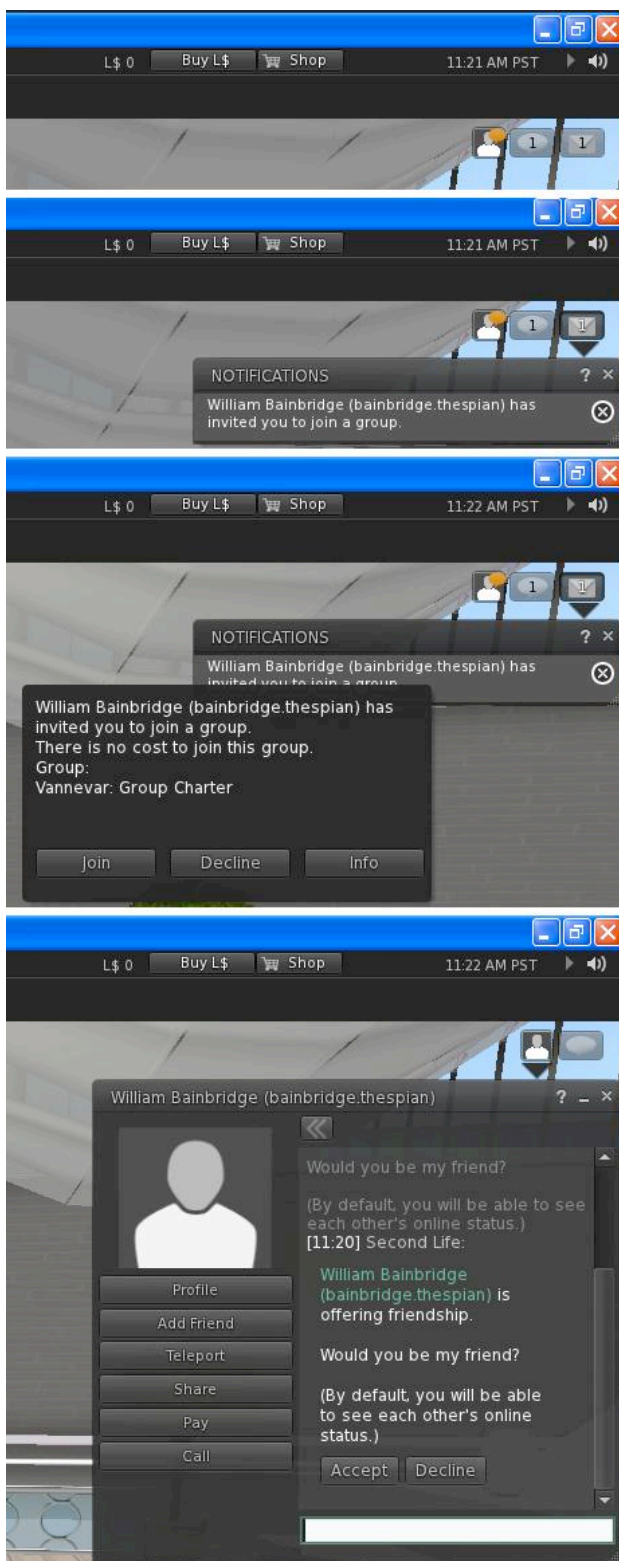
Similarly, clicking one of the other icons opens up a "friend" invitation from one of our avatars, which you should also accept to make communicating much easier.

In the upper left corner of your screen, two pull-down menus are especially important. The "Me" menu has a Preferences choice, which among other things gives you access to the Sound & Media preferences, which include some related to voice chat.

The World menu has several important choices. "Set landmark to here" remembers your location and allows you to return easily. Once you have landmarked a place, you can return to it by clicking the tiny globe icon at one side of your screen, and selecting that landmark. "Sun" in the World menu allows you to set the time of day, and if the scene gets too dark, you can set the time to Midday, which brightens things up considerably.

USING VOICE

As soon as your avatar has accepted our invitations to become friends and join Vannevar, we will offer you a tour of the island, mainly to check that your voice chat is working properly, but also to help you feel comfortable with the environment.

For VOICE CHAT you will need a headset - microphone integrated with earphones. We happen to have Logitech models here. Here is one source of guidance:

http://community.secondlife.com/t5/English-Knowledge-Base/Using-voice-chat/ta-p/700169

For voice, "click to talk" is best, rather than having all our microphones live all the time. A chorus of coughing, barking dogs, and banging on keyboards would be distractive, and sometimes annoying feedback can arise. When you want to talk, you can click the Speak button near the bottom center of your screen. After talking, click again and your microphone will be silenced.

Notice that when somebody is actually speaking in voice chat, a green indicator appears in the air over the avatar's head. This helps us associate talk with people. It also lets us know when we need to remind somebody to switch off their microphone when they are not talking. An almost invisible white dot over an avatar's head indicates that avatar's voice chat is working.

We will use the text chat for logistics, for example communicating with avatars who are not yet in the virtual meeting room, or sharing practical information that does not directly concern any particular proposal. The voice chat will be used for discussing the proposals, because it is more secure and does not legally constitute a formal record of the discussion. A summary of the discussion of each proposal will be written by a panelist designated the scribe for that proposal, using the highly secure and official NSF Interactive Panel System.

PANEL ISSUES

Please keep in mind that this panel is confidential, and we must preserve the privacy both of those who submitted proposals and of fellow panelists and reviewers.

Another important note: NSF review panels are serious business. One concern we have about teleconferencing in general is that people may not take the events as seriously as they would if they had to get on a plane, fly across the continent, and sleep in a hotel room. One of several reasons for considering virtual worlds, rather than just using voice chat with the Interactive Panel System, is to strengthen the sense that the panel is real, and thus really significant. It is! The proposals you are reviewing requested a total of millions of dollars, and the researchers invested considerable time in writing their proposals.

We have three virtual panel rooms on IISLand, of different sizes and styles. Below is a picture of the most recent addition, a medium-sized room which has seats for 10 people; our large panel room can accommodate 20. To sit on one of the stools, right-click on the stool itself and select Sit Here. Once seated, you can turn left or right with the corresponding arrow keys. Clicking a faint [Stand] button near the bottom center of your screen stands the avatar up from the stool.
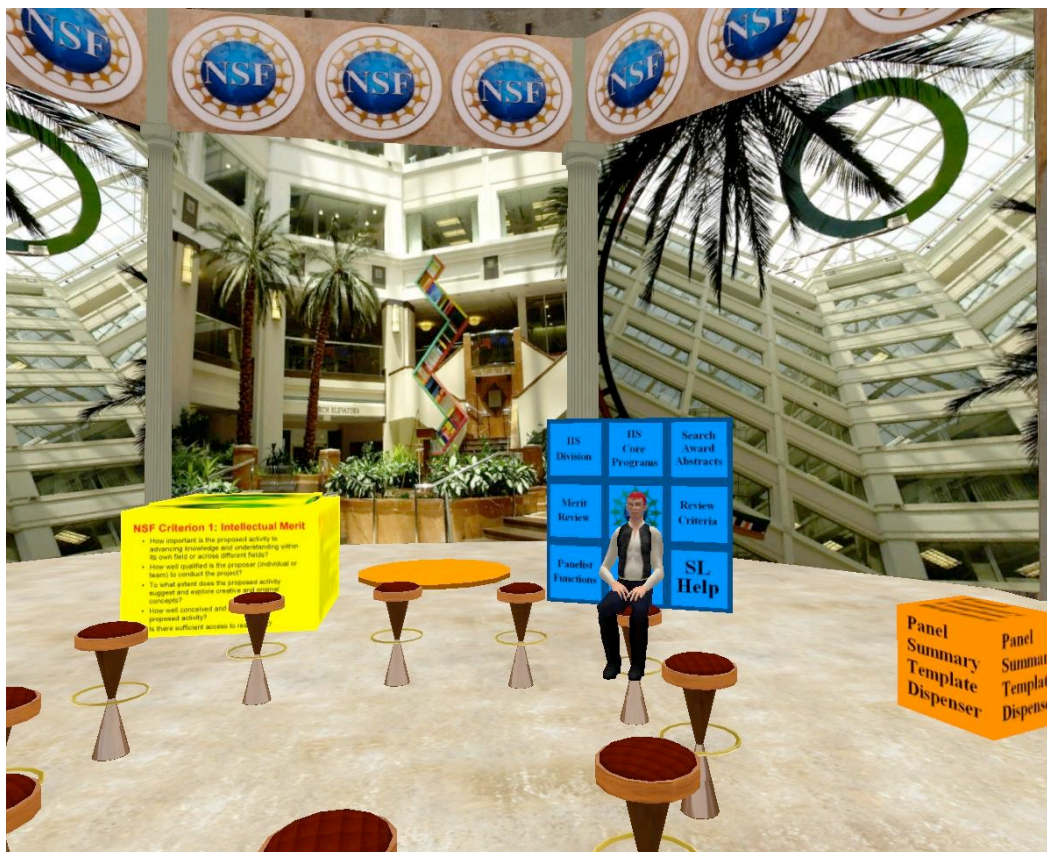
The orange disk on the floor is a teleport disk. Right-click, select Teleport, and you zoom to the largest panel room, were there are several other teleport disks that go to other parts of the island. Or, you can simply have your avatar walk out of whatever panel room you are in. If you need to leave because you have a conflict of interest with the proposal under discussion, simply move far enough away so you cannot hear the discussion - just as in the real world - perhaps visiting a display elsewhere on the island, and we can teleport you back when it is time to return.

Each panel room has several tools. Left-click (yes, LEFT) on one of the blue panels behind the seated avatar in the picture, and your web browser will open to part of the NSF website. For example, one labeled Panelist Functions takes you to the log-in screen of the Interactive Panel System. Left-click the orange cube labeled Panel Summary Template, and a series of windows gives you the template scribes will use to write panel summaries.

When you arrive for the panel, you will see that we have assigned each of you to be "scribe" for some of the proposals. When we consider a proposal on which you are scribe, please begin the discussion with a brief summary of what the proposal is all about. Then offer a summary of the main points of your review. We will be able to read your review through the Interactive Panel System, so please really summarize rather than read it. Then other reviewers will add their comments, and other panelists may contribute questions or observations as well. In your capacity

as scribe, you may need to ask questions of the group to collect material for each part of the panel summary template (copied below). After the discussion of a proposal is over, please complete your summary and paste it into the appropriate place on the Summary page of that proposal's section of the system, and Submit for Comment. Others can then read it and send you written comments through the Interactive Panel System. We will explain more at the panel itself.

Below is the Panel Summary Template we will be using. When you are acting as scribe, you will use this template to take notes summarizing the discussion, using an ordinary text editor (with smart quotes etc. turned off!). Then, when you have a good draft of the summary, you will paste it into the appropriate place in the Interactive Panel System and Submit for Comment. Other panelists will then use the groupware to make suggestions about edits and additions.

Panel Summary: IIS Core Solicitation (Smalls)

A brief statement of what the proposal is about:

Intellectual merit:
- Strengths

- Weaknesses

- To what extent does the proposed activity suggest and explore creative, original, or potentially transformative concepts?

Broader impacts, including enhancing diversity and integrating research and education:
- Strengths

- Weaknesses

Results from prior NSF support (if applicable):

Soundness of the collaboration plan (if applicable):

Soundness of the data management plan:

Soundness of the post-doc mentoring plan (if applicable):

Additional suggestions (optional):

Panel recommendation:
__ Highly Competitive
__ Competitive
__ Low Competitive
__ Not Recommended for Funding by the Panel

Justification, including key strengths and critical weaknesses:

The summary was read by the panel, and the panel concurred that the summary accurately reflects the panel discussion.